

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMO #2731/01 2551235
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 111235Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9940
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 002731

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: INGUSH OPPOSITION STILL HOPES ZYAZIKOV'S DAYS ARE
NUMBERED

REF: MOSCOW 2628

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Alice G. Wells; reason 1.4
(d)

11. (SBU) Summary: Colleagues of slain Ingush opposition leader Magomed Yevloyev, in Moscow to tell their version of Yevloyev's August 31 death (reftel), told us September 10 that Ingushetiya president Murat Zyazikov has lost all local support and the opposition movement will continue its efforts to get rid of him. They admitted that Ruslan Aushev, Zyazikov's predecessor, was not a likely candidate to succeed him because he could not be controlled by the Kremlin. They expressed appreciation for the strong USG statement calling for a thorough investigation of Yevloyev's death, but worried that the local government in Ingushetiya had proposed drastic measures to shut down their Ingushetiya.ru website. The September 10 slaying of Zyazikov's cousin may be the start of a "blood feud." End Summary.

12. (C) Poloff met September 10 with Magomed Khazbiyev, the organizer of recent opposition demonstrations in Ingushetiya, and his lawyer Musa Pshyev to discuss the August 31 death in Nazran of opposition leader Magomed Yevloyev while in police custody. On September 3, the government of Ingushetiya began a criminal suit against Khazbiyev and Maksharip Aushev, the new owner of the opposition Ingushetiya.ru website, for allegedly taking documents and registered firearms away from policemen during the protests that followed Yevloyev's September 1 funeral. Pshyev was Yevloyev's Moscow-based lawyer and is advising Khazbiyev in the criminal suit filed against him. Moscow Helsinki Group Chairperson Lyudmila Alekseyeva arranged the meeting, held at her apartment in Moscow.

Yevloyev's Last Hours

13. (C) Khazbiyev said that he had come to Moscow to inform the media, human rights groups and western diplomats as to what transpired in Nazran on August 31. According to him, Yevloyev arrived on the same flight from Moscow at the nearby Magas airport as Ingushetiya president Murat Zyazikov. Khazbiyev repeated his version of events as recounted in numerous media outlets. He said that at one point during the two-hour flight, a member of Zyazikov's security detail entered the economy class cabin and asked for Yevloyev to identify himself. After their arrival in Magas, Zyazikov was met by Ingushetiya's Minister for Internal Affairs Musa Medov and after an exchange of several words, Medov motioned for several identical armed police vehicles to approach the parked airplane after both had left the airport. Three policemen then accompanied Yevloyev into one of the vehicles, which he entered on his own accord, and departed the airport at a high speed via a seldom-used exit. According to Khazbiyev, Yevloyev may have initially thought he was being brought in for questioning as a witness, although Pshyev said that he later learned that the Ingushetiya prosecutor's

office had quickly prepared a warrant for his arrest as a suspect in one or more bombings that occurred several months ago when Yevloyev was abroad.

14. (C) Khazbiyev said there were 50-60 friends and relatives at the airport to greet Yevloyev. Several men gave chase to the vehicle in which they believed Yevloyev was being transported and caught up with it after 30 minutes only to discover that Yevloyev was not inside. Khazbiyev said that the men, all relatives of Yevloyev, considered taking the policemen hostage in order to exchange them for Yevloyev. Pshyev said that he was the first to receive notice from a duty police officer ten minutes later that Yevloyev had been delivered to the hospital suffering from a fatal gunshot wound to his head.

Opposition to Zyazikov Will Continue

15. (C) Khazbiyev said the opposition to Zyazikov will continue despite Yevloyev's death. Both he and Pshyev agreed with Alekseyeva that demonstrations in Ingushetiya might result in further casualties. The movement had decided, therefore, to stage a series of small protests in Moscow calling for Zyazikov's removal. On August 27, President Medvedev's office forwarded a request from Khazbiyev for the immediate removal of Zyazikov as president of Ingushetiya to the Permanent Representative for Russia's Southern Region for its action. On September 10 Khazbiyev sent another letter to Belan Khamchiyev, a member of the Duma from Ingushetiya and a representative of the ruling United Russia party, asking him to have the Ministry of Foreign Affairs evaluate recent accusations by Zyazikov that western governments --

particularly the United States -- are responsible for all of Ingushetiya's problems, including not only kidnappings and murders of innocent civilians, but also Ingushetiya's high unemployment. Khazbiyev appreciated the strong official USG statement on Yevloyev's death. (Note: Moskovskiy Komsolmolets editor Pavel Gusev told us he purposely published a "ludicrous" interview with Zyazikov, in he claimed the U.S. was behind Yevloyev's murder, in order to discredit the Ingush president. Gusev, who also heads a Journalist Union, refused Zyazikov's request for a meeting, terming Yevloyev's death an "official murder." End Note).

16. (C) Khazbiyev said that Zyazikov has lost any and all support from the population of Ingushetiya. He said that the opposition movements next planned action will be to send elderly Ingush, most of whom are WWII veterans, to Moscow to protest Zyazikov's continued tenure as president. Both Khazbiyev and Pshyev were concerned over attempts by the government to limit access to the Ingushetiya.ru website over mobile telephones by pressuring companies that operate locally to block access to it and rumors that the government will close down all internet access if that is what it finally takes to deprive residents access to their only source of criticism of the government. They noted that broadcasts of the Moscow-based moderate Radio Ekho-Moskviy and REN-TV are already blocked.

17. (C) Echoing media speculation, Pshyev said that he believed the Kremlin is prepared to replace Zyazikov. Both he and Khazbiyev said that while former president Ruslan Aushev has huge popular support locally, a more palatable choice for the Kremlin might be Duma member Khamchiyev. Alekseyeva pointed out that during his tenure as president Aushev was also authoritarian, but added that his time in office was not marked by the violence that has wracked Ingushetiya under Zyazikov. Neither Pshyev nor Khazbiyev ventured the name of any other possible successor.

Comment

18. (C) A possible "blood feud" may have commenced over Yevloyev's murder. On September 10, unknown gunmen killed Zyazikov's cousin while he was driving his car in Nazran.

Some commentators have ventured that it may be too early for Medvedev to consider replacing Zyazikov, who has tried to protect himself in the wake of events in nearby South Ossetia by implicating "western involvement" in Ingushetiya's internal affairs. It remains to be seen if replacing Zyazikov -- named as president by Putin in 2002 -- will be yet another possible Medvedev initiative side-tracked by his new tougher response to internal and external criticism.

BEYRLE